

and its people isolated from each other. We will work with our allies and partners to assist those seeking to return Belarus to its rightful place among the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies. There is no place in a Europe whole and free for a regime of this kind.

On October 17, Mr. Lukashenka claimed victory for referendum results that swept away constitutional limits on his term in office. The referendum campaign and concurrent Parliamentary elections were conducted in a climate of abuse and fear. OSCE and other observers have determined that this victory was achieved by fraudulent means.

These actions are the latest in a series of measures designed to stifle independent voices within Belarus. Since 2001, Belarusian authorities have systematically repressed independent media, trade unions, civic organizations, and religious congregations. The Lukashenka regime has repeatedly responded to the peaceful expression of opposition with beatings, arrests and, in a number of cases, the disappearance of opposition leaders.

The Belarus Democracy Act will help us support those within Belarus who are working toward democracy. We welcome this legislation as a means to bolster friends of freedom and to nurture the growth of democratic values, habits, and institutions within Belarus. The fate of Belarus will rest not with a dictator, but with the students, trade unionists, civic and religious leaders, journalists, and all citizens of Belarus claiming freedom for their nation.

NOTE: H.R. 854, approved October 20, was assigned Public Law No. 108-347.

Proclamation 7835—National Disability Employment Awareness Month, 2004

October 20, 2004

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Americans with disabilities are active and contributing members of our society, and they must have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to compete and obtain

jobs in the 21st century workforce. By reducing physical barriers and false perceptions, our country meets our commitment to millions of Americans with disabilities, and benefits from their talents, creativity, and hard work.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) has brought about important progress in our Nation. Under my Administration's New Freedom Initiative, we continue to work to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in the workplace and all aspects of community life. Through funding for new technologies and innovative resources, we are changing old ways of thinking and fulfilling the Federal Government's commitment to opportunity for every citizen.

The New Freedom Initiative has helped enable individuals with disabilities to access assistive technologies. My Administration has invested in research and development for new technology. We have expanded the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program, which provides Federal employees with disabilities greater access to electronic and information technology. The Department of Labor launched *DisabilityInfo.gov* in 2002, an online resource that streamlines access to information about Federally sponsored employment, job accommodations, transportation, State and regional assistance programs, technology, and other programs relevant to the daily lives of individuals with disabilities.

We must foster a better understanding of ADA requirements and increase dialogue and cooperation between the business and disability communities. Through the New Freedom Small Business Initiative, the Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration are educating small business owners about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and helping adult workers with disabilities acquire the skills and resources needed to become small business owners. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is releasing user-friendly information on how the ADA applies to particular disabilities in the workplace and providing free ADA workshops offering employment-related services and information sessions for small businesses. My Administration

is implementing the “Ticket to Work” program, which allows Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability beneficiaries who want to work to choose their own employment-related services. The Department of Labor and other agencies are also improving the capacity of community One-Stop Career Centers to provide training and employment services to people with disabilities.

To recognize the contributions of Americans with disabilities and to encourage all citizens to ensure equal opportunity in the workforce, the Congress, by joint resolution approved August 11, 1945, as amended (36 U.S.C. 121), has designated October of each year as “National Disability Employment Awareness Month.”

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 2004 as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. I call upon Government officials, labor leaders, employers, and the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:08 a.m., October 22, 2004]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 21, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on October 25.

Proclamation 7836—National Forest Products Week, 2004

October 20, 2004

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

America’s forests are places of beauty and incredible natural wealth. They are homes to wildlife and offer many economic opportunities for our Nation. During National Forest

Products Week, we recognize the many benefits of our forests and continue our dedication to protecting them.

Across our country, many communities rely on healthy forests for economic stability. Our forests provide paper products, building materials, chemicals, and many other items needed by families and small businesses across America. Responsible forest management helps provide jobs and maintain these important resources to help meet the daily needs of Americans and people around the world.

My Administration has made forest health a high priority, and we will continue to promote active management and forest conservation. Under the Healthy Forests Initiative, we acted to remove the causes of severe wildfires by thinning forest undergrowth before disaster strikes. And the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, which I signed into law last December, expands our work, helping protect valuable lands that serve as habitat for wildlife and ensuring the safety and economic vitality of communities affected by wildfires. The Act enforces high standards of conservation to help return our forests to more natural conditions and maintain the full range of forest types.

To ensure that our forests remain a source of pride for all Americans, we must continue our tradition of protecting the land for future generations. By combining the ethic of good stewardship with the spirit of innovation, we can advance a healthy environment and continue economic growth and job creation.

In recognizing the importance of our forests, the Congress, by Public Law 86–753 (36 U.S.C. 123), as amended, has designated the week beginning on the third Sunday in October of each year as “National Forest Products Week” and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 17 through October 23, 2004, as National Forest Products Week. I call upon all Americans to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of October, in